



Doing What Works

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FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Working with English Learners in Kindergarten

Indiantown, FL • April 2007

Topic: Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners

Practice: Screen and Monitor Progress

Highlights

- Describes how one student progressed from being a non-English-speaking student at high risk for phonemic awareness and letter naming skills at the beginning of the year to being at grade level in reading by the end of the year

About the Site

Warfield Elementary School (K-4)
Indiantown, FL

Demographics

75% Hispanic, 5% White, 17% Black
96% Free or reduced-price lunch
67% Limited English proficient

Warfield Elementary School uses an inclusive, English immersion approach for their English learners, the majority of whom are of Guatemalan descent and speak either Spanish or one of several Guatemalan Indian dialects, which lack a written language. Distinctive features of the school include:

- A continuous improvement model for instruction; data disaggregation and

analysis, facilitated by a reading coach and writing/math coach, drive all instruction

- Instructional calendars for all content areas and grade levels that show standards being taught, instructional activities, and assessments to monitor student progress
- A schoolwide reading program based on an external model, along with a core textbook program
- Data available to teachers on fast turnaround, either in profiles produced by the reading coach or through reports from district and state databases
- Whole-group instruction based on the instructional calendars, combined with flexible small-group instruction based on students' needs
- Interventions provided within the classroom, including several that are technology-based
- Instructional strategies that are research-based; for example, a vocabulary program that is based on Isabel Beck's research
- All teachers with an ESOL endorsement on their teaching certificates
- Paraprofessionals who speak the children's native languages to ease the transition into school and support teachers in working with students

Full Transcript

(I am) Lynette Walker. I'm a kindergarten teacher at Warfield Elementary School in Indiantown, Florida.

Beatriz is the student that I would like to share with you. When she entered the classroom, she was in a phase of not speaking at all, so she did not communicate in any way at any time, and that went on for some time—I would say maybe the first 60 days—and although she participated in whatever we did, by showing up at the station and showing up at the activity, it was very difficult to get feedback from her whether she was receiving the information or not. I'd say 60 days into the school year was when she first started doing her random letters but, frankly, prior to that she just didn't. She would show up at the center. She would follow directions. She was very obedient. She wasn't engaging with the listening, but the room itself is very verbal. So, she always was by children who were speaking, even though she was not. She certainly took in the clues of what was going on, even just being able to function as we rotated stations. To me, not only did she have language concerns, she also seemed shy. So she seemed to hold back. I think she was assimilating all of the information, and yet not sharing that, unable to express it verbally, but very much lots of things were going on for her.

After that initial 60-day period, you could see evidence of her writing in her journal because we did journal every day, and she did do illustrations. Initially, many diverse, unrelated pictures like sun, frog, grass. She was not able or she was unwilling to share any of that. I did bring in an interpreter or translator every day who spoke to all my non-English-speaking students in the hopes that they could better explain to them what I was trying to do. So that went on every single day, from day one.

Like most children at this level, like most initial writers, she went with a random string of letters, so she did learn letters, and she did put them down, but she might write a story and do “x p q t z, ” and show a sun and a frog, or show a sun and a valentine or something not necessarily connected.

Then, through the months, it was a wonderful progression that you can see. She’s very, very successful. She’s now writing complete sentences, and although it isn’t a perfect world—we still have many skills we’re working on—she’s made tremendous growth in this year.

In regard to Beatriz’s growth, in regard to DIBELS evaluation, we have the beginning of the year and the end of the year for initial sounds, and at the beginning of the year, she was in the high-risk category. At the end of the year, she was low-risk. Low-risk is considered on grade level. For the letter-name fluency, she started at a high-risk designation, and she went to above average, which is considered above kindergarten level. In regards to her phoneme segmentation, she started at above level, which is above grade level, and now she is at grade level, and that is because as the year goes on, the expectations change in regard to the requirement, but she’s very successful. In regard to nonsense word fluency, she was above level, really at the beginning in January. So in January, she was reading three-letter words above level, and at the end of the year, she is still at that level, which is extremely successful for kindergarten.